

**Acts 4:1 ¶ And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,**  
**Acts 4:2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.**  
**Acts 4:3 And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.**

The chapter break is unfortunate since this is obviously a continuation of the preceding chapter. "They" is a reference to Peter and John. It is Peter's words that are recorded, but obviously John interacted with the people in the crowd as well. At some point during the gathering the priests, the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees apprehended the two apostles. The religious leaders had learned that Peter and John were preaching a message of power and salvation based upon the resurrection of Jesus, and they didn't like it. The two apostles were placed in prison overnight.

The Sadducees were a powerful sect of religious liberals who did not believe in the resurrection.

*Acts 23:8 "For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection...."*

The NIV Commentary provided more information on the Sadducees. They were "descendants of the Hasmoneans, who looked to Mattathias, Judas, Jonathan, and Simon Maccabeus (168–134 B.C.) as having inaugurated the Messianic Age and saw themselves as perpetuating what their fathers had begun. As priests from the tribe of Levi, they claimed to represent ancient orthodoxy and were uninterested in innovations.... For them, the Messiah was an ideal, not a person, and the Messianic Age was a process, not a cataclysmic or even datable event."

**Acts 4:4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.**

Evidently, the gospel message touched the hearts of many that heard it, and about 5,000 men responded in belief.

**Acts 4:5 ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes,**

**Acts 4:6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.**

**Acts 4:7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?**

The next morning the religious leaders gathered to confront the two apostles. Specifically named are Annas the high priest and Caiaphas. In their gospels both Luke and John provide further information.

*Luke 3:2 "Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests...."*

*John 18:13 "And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year."*

Some references pose the possibility that John was the son of Annas that succeeded Caiaphas as high priest. The context indicates that John and Alexander were kin to the high priests and that the family was gathered together in Jerusalem at that time. The NIV Commentary concludes that the reference is to a gathering of the Sanhedrin, basically the supreme court of the Jewish people.

The first question put to the apostles: "By what power, or by what name, have you done this [miracle of healing is implied by the context]?" They knew it had been done through supernatural empowerment. This was a God-given opportunity to share the gospel with the whole ruling body.

**Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,  
Acts 4:9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;  
Acts 4:10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole.**

Peter maintains the position of designated spokesman. Point is made that he was filled with Holy Ghost prior to giving his response; this implies to me that Peter was being given the very words to use as he answered the authorities. It also implies to me that although every believer is sealed by the indwelling Holy Spirit as the guarantee of our inheritance in Jesus, we need ongoing specific empowerment of the Holy Spirit to accomplish great things for God.

*Ephesians 1:12–14 "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."*

Peter first clarifies that his answer is in response to the healing of the impotent man—a good deed, not one worthy of imprisonment. He then declares boldly that in no uncertain terms everyone should understand that this healing was done "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead." It was through the power of Jesus Christ that this man had been completely healed and made whole—just as if he had never been impotent. What a picture of our salvation! When God saves us from our sin, He declares us justified—just as if we had never sinned.

Note that Peter wasn't afraid to be politically incorrect. He pronounced the ruling authorities accountable for the death of Jesus. He wasn't worried about delivering a seeker-sensitive message; he was interested in declaring the truth.

One can't help but think of the words of Jesus as He taught the disciples.

*Matthew 10:17–20 “But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.”*

*Luke 21:12–15 “But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name’s sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.”*

John Trapp: “Evil times we must needs say they are when good deeds and evil are dangerous alike; when to cure or to kill is equally criminal.”

**Acts 4:11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.**

**Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.**

“This is the stone” – The “stone” is sometimes used in scripture to picture the Messiah. What both the psalmist and Isaiah declare, Peter affirms as applying to Jesus.

*Psalms 118:21–22 “I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.”*

*Isaiah 8:13–14 “Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”*

*Isaiah 28:16 “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.”*

*1 Peter 2:5–8 “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.”*

Again, boldly and without apology or excuse, Peter declares that Jesus is the only name under heaven through which one can find salvation—to be spiritually

healed and made whole.

We know that the spiritual leaders understood Peter's application because they understood it when Jesus had made the same application previously.

*Matthew 21:42–45 “Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.”*

**Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.**

**Acts 4:14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.**

The religious leaders were amazed at the boldness of Peter and John; they knew that they had not been educated or trained in the established rabbinic educational system. They also recognized them as having been companions of Jesus, He who had also boldly and confidently confronted them. However, the man that had been healed was standing with them; and they could not deny their assertions (just as was promised in the verses from Matthew 10 and Luke 21 quoted above).

Isn't it interesting to note that not one of the religious leaders questioned the veracity of the resurrection of Jesus!

**Acts 4:15 ¶ But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,**

**Acts 4:16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.**

**Acts 4:17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.**

**Acts 4:18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.**

The leaders decided they needed to make a decision as to how to respond to the apostles and asked them to “wait outside,” so to speak, while they conferred. They knew they couldn't deny the miracle because there were too many witnesses to it. This implies to me that they would have denied it if they thought they could get away with it. They decided that the next best thing was to ensure that the witness of this man and the message of the apostles not be allowed to spread. So they decided to threaten them and forbid them to speak or teach in the name of Jesus any more.

**Acts 4:19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.**

**Acts 4:20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.**

**Acts 4:21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was done.**

**Acts 4:22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.**

It is significant to me that though Peter has been the main spokesman, both Peter and John answer the ruling authorities. They basically said: As God is your witness, You can decide whether or not it is right that we should obey God rather than you. As far as we are concerned, we are going to testify to the things that we have seen and heard and know to be the truth.

In other words, they believed they were doing God's will, and they were not willing to go against that will in submission to the will of any man—no matter how powerful he might be or what penalty they might incur.

All the authorities could do was threaten them further and let them go. They had no valid reason to punish them. The people supported them and glorified God for the man's healing—a man who was over 40 years old.

**Acts 4:23 ¶ And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.**

**Acts 4:24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:**

**Acts 4:25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?**

**Acts 4:26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.**

Once freed, Peter and John went back to their friends and told them all that had been said to them. The response of the group of believers was to lift up their voices in praise and prayerful worship to God. They acknowledged Him as their Creator and quoted the words of David.

*Psalms 2:1–2 "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed...."*

The question of the psalmist reverberates to this very day. Why do the masses and royalty of earth position themselves against God and His Messiah? God's word is a message of His desire to raise man up from the depths of sin to which he has fallen and restore him to the position of blessing that was his at creation. God's commands are rooted in His love and concern for us, in His desire to protect and empower us, in His desire to bless us abundantly.

And we know the answer to the psalmist's question.

*Ephesians 2:2–3 “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, **the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience**: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”*

*Ephesians 6:11–12 “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”*

**Acts 4:27** For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

**Acts 4:28** For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

As the body of believers continued to pray, they acknowledged how Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and the people of Israel acted in accordance with God's purposes when they schemed to destroy “Thy holy child Jesus,” the anointed Messiah.

**Acts 4:29** And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

**Acts 4:30** By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

**Acts 4:31** And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

The prayer moved into a time of asking God to continue to strengthen the apostles with boldness to speak His word and to continue to perform healings to serve as signs and wonders testifying to proof of Jesus as the Messiah.

When the people finished praying, “the place was shaken.” Was it just an emotional upheaval or an earthquake or maybe both?

Every believer there was subsequently filled with the Holy Spirit and went out to speak the word of God with boldness. “Please, LORD, fill me with Thy Spirit to always do the same!”

Note: They were already sealed with the indwelling Holy Spirit but were filled anew to strengthen and empower.

**Acts 4:32 ¶** And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

**Acts 4:33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.**

**Acts 4:34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,**

**Acts 4:35 And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.**

Again Luke emphasizes the unity of heart and spirit of the believers in the early church. They all considered "their stuff" to be "God's stuff" to be used to supply the needs of all and accomplish His will. The apostles continued to boldly witness about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

"great grace was upon them all" – I always love to see the Greek for the word "grace"—"especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life." When we are acting with the grace of God, we are acting according to His influence. Those actions always impact our lives in ways that others recognize as godly. When the body of believers lives according to "grace," no one in the body should be allowed to go without what they "need." Our stuff should be reckoned God's stuff and used accordingly. "Lord, please continue to grow me in discernment in this area."

David Guzik made an important observation on this section of scripture:

"Unfortunately, this generosity of the early Christians soon began to be abused. Later the Apostle Paul taught regarding who should be helped and how they should be helped. Paul's directions were that:

- The church must discern who the truly needy are (1 Timothy 5:3).
- If one can work to support himself, he is not truly needy and must provide for his own needs (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12, 1 Timothy 5:8, 1 Thessalonians 4:11).
- If family can support a needy person, the church should not support them (1 Timothy 5:3-4).
- Those who are supported by the church must make some return to the church body (1 Timothy 5:5, 10).
- It is right for the church to examine moral conduct before giving support (1 Timothy 5:9-13).
- The support of the church should be for the most basic necessities of living (1 Timothy 6:8)."

**Acts 4:36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus,**

**Acts 4:37 Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.**

Luke singles out one man as an example of a man living by “grace,” Joses, surnamed Barnabas. His name means “son of consolation” or “son of encouragement.” He was a Levite from the country of Cyprus that sold his land and brought the money to the apostles to use for the benefit of the growing church.

I believe my ministry is to be a daughter of encouragement, especially in the body of believers according to the words of Paul.

*Galatians 6:10 “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”*